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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the beliefs and practices of high school language arts teachers regarding mandated multicultural education in the language arts. Subjects, five tenured faculty in the language arts program of a midwestern high school, volunteered to be interviewed and have their classrooms observed while they conducted multicultural instruction. Interviews and videotapes were transcribed and analyzed. Results indicated that: (1) all teachers brought to the study a complex network of knowledge and experience about multicultural education; (2) the teachers held rationales about multicultural/nonsexist policies that agreed with the overall intent of the state mandate; (3) the teachers saw their role in multicultural education as a provider of experiences that would enhance students' understandings of themselves and the world around them; (4) the ways in which teachers presented lessons and discussed teaching were consistent across language arts and multicultural education; and (5) the greatest impact in teachers' understandings of multicultural education was imbedded in their understandings of teaching and learning. (One figure of data is included; 16 references and the state code describing the multicultural/nonsexist education policy are attached.) (RS)

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Negotiating a Mandate: Secondary Teachers' Understandings and Implementations of Multicultural Education in the Language Arts

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Conceptual Background

Educational reform efforts over the last 35 years have focused on reconceptualizing the school curriculum so that it represents the cultural diversity of the United States' population. For many educators, providing students with a multicultural education has become increasingly important given current demographic projections which show that by the year 2000, students of color will represent 46% of the nation's school-age youth (Banks, 1991a). As Banks and others have noted, if the current level of educational attainment of students of color is not increased, most of these students will be inadequately prepared to meet the requirements of the job market. This is especially true in the area of literacy, where adequate preparation means being able to succeed in such information processing demands as synthesis, assessment, organization, and monitoring (Reder & Green, 1983; Stedman & Kaestle, 1987). This demand for literate activity also shapes a culture's view of reality and the value and importance placed on members in that culture (Eisenstein, 1985; Winchester, 1985). Most jobs today require workers to have some level of literacy skill in order to keep their jobs and continue to successfully perform their work (Guthrie, Schafer, & Hutchinson, 1991; Mikulecky & Winchester, 1983). Recognizing this economic imperative as well as the belief that educational equity is the cornerstone of educational excellence, various professional education associations and accreditation agencies have proposed guidelines for multicultural infusion across the curriculum (Martin, 1991). By 1977, 34 states were addressing multicultural education through legislation, regulations, guidelines, or policies (American Association for Colleges for Teacher Education, 1978). Presently, almost every state has established some form of guidelines and regulations for addressing diversity in schooling.

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Specific to language arts, there is less direction provided in the area of multicultural education both at the national and state level in terms of guidelines for instruction and curriculum development. Even within professional organizations, instructional guidelines are limited. The National Council of Teachers of English provides no formal curriculum guidelines document, but rather resolutions (definitions) regarding multicultural education as well as position statements regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students' success and nonwhite minorities' representation in materials. However, Banks (1991b) equated multicultural education with simply good teaching, where teachers are tuned to a wide range of needs in the classroom, and materials and curriculum are designed around a success model for all students. From this view, multicultural education in language arts can be evaluated through the tenets of good teaching--examining the complex interactions of such factors as curriculum, instructional materials, instructional approaches, belief structures, and personal experience.

Often the focus of multicultural education rests with the more tangible, surface level elements of instruction, such as materials used. In language arts, material selection, such as literature emphasizing respect for different historical perspectives and cultures as well as being by and about people of color (Madigan, 1993) is often the central focus of a multicultural program. However, critical to the success of any material selection is the culturally relevant manner in which instruction occurs. Through culturally relevant teaching, students are empowered to critically examine educational content and process and ask questions regarding the role of education and society at large, using the students' culture to assist in the process of making meaning and creating understanding (Ladson-Billings, 1992). Success is seen not only in the academic sense, but in the cultural and social sense as well.

Proponents of multicultural education have been successful in providing a conceptual, a prescriptive and, in some states, a legal framework for implementation. What current research has failed to clarify is how teachers

designed to influence their practice. There are a few studies on what teachers are actually doing in their classrooms, how teachers beliefs and practices are framed by the particular policy contexts and standards within which they work, and how these beliefs influence the content and process of instruction (Grant & Sleeter, 1986; Haberman & Post, 1990; Swadener, 1986; Washington, 1982). However, little is known about how teachers give meaning to educational policies and to what extent, and under what circumstances, these policies actually change teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1990). Research has shown that the effects of educational policies on classroom practices depend primarily on how teachers negotiate and construct those policies--rather than adopting policy, teachers adapt policy (Cohen & Ball, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1990; Richardson, 1990). Addressing the "policy making" dimension of teachers' work involves examining not only teachers' practices but also their rationale for those practices. Richardson (1990) noted that while the activities suggested by research and theory and those implemented by teachers might be called the same thing, they might, in fact, be different if teachers' and researchers' practices are embedded in different belief systems, intentions, and theoretical orientations.

From this perspective, in order to understand changes in teaching practices related to multicultural education mandate expectations it is necessary to investigate the standards, beliefs, and theoretical views regarding multiculturalism that lead teachers to legitimize certain classroom practices and reject others. For this study, these issues were investigated in the specific context of language arts instruction at the high school level. Through interviews and observations, the beliefs, intentions, and theoretical frameworks of 5 secondary language arts teachers were examined as they interpreted and responded to state mandated multicultural, nonsexist educational standards. The specific question addressed in this investigation was: What are the beliefs and practices of high school language arts teachers regarding mandated multicultural education in the language arts?

Research Methodology

The site

The study was conducted in one Midwest high school, located in a city of 23,000. The school district has 12 schools, employing 318 certified teaching staff, 5 of whom are ethnic minority. Total student enrollment K-12 is 5,677. Of the 1,652 high school students, 12.7% are minority students, of whom 10% are Hispanic.

Participants

Five high school teachers had volunteered to participate in this study. All 5 were tenured faculty in the language arts program at the high school. Their areas of language arts study involved poetry, speech, mythology, literature, and film. All 5 teachers had an interest in multicultural education and had developed multicultural lessons for their respective language arts areas. None had been trained in any formal program of study in multicultural education.

Methodology

To examine these teachers' beliefs about the multicultural/nonsexist (MCNS) policy as well as the policy's impact on their practices, an audiotaped belief interview, a videotaped observation, and an audiotaped practical argument interview were conducted. Each teacher was videotaped at a teacher-designated time when multicultural instruction was occurring in their classes. The belief interviews were conducted after the videotaping of a lesson, but before the videotape was viewed by the teacher or the researchers. The belief interview focused on such areas as: (a) teachers knowledge of the policy of MCNS education and its implications for their practice, (b) their beliefs about the benefits and need for a multicultural approach, (c) their views on cultural pluralism, the philosophical basis for MCNS policy, (d) their views on how to best meet the needs of a diverse student body, (e) assessment and instruction of MCNS educational objectives, (f) resources available and needed for implementation, and (g) other district policies and practices that affect their ability to implement this policy (e.g., ability grouping). Interviews

were designed to elicit teachers' beliefs about multicultural education through open-ended questions (constructing teachers' propositions about their own realities) and close-ended questions (establishing interviewer's understanding). Following the belief interview, each teacher privately viewed the videotape, then met with the researchers to discuss through a practical argument interview the rationales for the instruction within the taped lesson. During this viewing, the teacher discussed the instr ional practices pertaining to multicultural education within the context of the lesson, providing reasonings and rationales for specific instructional choices and interactions (Fenstermacher, 1986; Richardson & Anders, 1990).

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred both concurrently and after data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). In-the-field analysis involved an interactive process for focusing and narrowing the inquiry. After the data were collected, all audio and videotapes were transcribed. The belief interview transcripts, videotaped lesson transcripts, and practical argument transcripts were analyzed using a categorizational methodology (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) involving the development of thematic categories emerging from the data and related to a variety of focuses. (Such examples of thematic categories were how MCNS education is interpreted and implemented by teachers in different language focus areas, and teachers' philosophical beliefs regarding pluralism.)

Results

All 5 teachers brought to the study a complex network of knowledge and experience about multicultural education. By first providing an overview of each teacher's background experiences in multicultural education, a more clear picture of the individual teacher emerges and helps depict the overall story of how teachers work with and negotiate a mandate for multicultural education (see Appendix A for an overview of the state mandate).

The following is a brief synopsis of each teacher:

Arnold
- 49 year-old white male from New Jersey
- Taught at the school for 18 years
- Descendent of Finnish and Swedish immigrants who assimilated
- He regrets having lost his cultural heritage

Fred
- 44 year-old, Puerto-Rican from New York
- Taught at the school for 6 years
- Attended elementary schools that punished him for speaking Spanish
- He cannot speak Spanish fluently as an adult
- Worked in Native-American reservation for 4-5 years

Jim
- 43 year-old, native born Iowan, white male
- Taught at the school for 15 years
- Attended all schooling in Northern Iowa
- Feels he had little if any early experience with diversity

Cathy:
- 43-year old, native born Iowan, grew up within 20 miles of school in German ethnic community, white female
- Taught at the school for over 15 years
- Attended all schooling in Iowa - has had many graduate level courses in multicultural education and cultural studies

Betty:
- 47-year old, native of Nebraska, white female, raised in a small rural town
- Recalls the only diversity she knew as a child were two Black barbers whose store she would frequent
- Taught at the school for 23 years
- Attended elementary and secondary schools in Nebraska
- First real teaching experience in diversity was in Omaha schools during a visit in her student teaching program
- Bachelors in English from college in Nebraska, Masters in English Education from Northwest Missouri, plus 93 hours over a masters, from different Iowa and out-of-state universities

Each teacher could be seen as an individual case study in both understandings of multicultural education and the manner in which multiculturalism was incorporated within classroom teaching. Yet all 5 teachers shared similar understandings of an infusion model for multicultural education in the classroom and the role of the teacher in working with non-English speakers. While the teachers' knowledge of the multicultural mandate (Appendix A) varied from uncertainty of the overall purpose to specific recitation of the mandate objectives, all 5 teachers viewed multicultural education as an infusion model involving the articulation of specific artifactual information about cultures different than their own and the inclusion of materials about different cultures and created by members of minority groups. While five different areas of language arts were represented in the multicultural lessons (poetry, literature, mythology, film, and

speech), the pervasive factor for classroom instruction was the individual teacher's beliefs about the role of the teacher and the role of the student. All 5 teachers believed their role was to help non-English speaking students to move toward English dominance in school work. Only 1 of the 5 teachers spoke and understood Spanish, yet all 5 teachers believed students should use Spanish as a means to completing classroom assignments.

Each teacher discussed the term Multiculturalism consistently as a tossed salad metaphor, both in their belief interviews and in their teaching. Yet, they did not agree to the meaning nor impact of such a metaphor. Some felt a tossed salad was a positive synergistic relationship across diverse groups.

Arnold: The salad bar or a quilt is more affirming than the melting pot. If we take the melting pot view then whose dignity or worth do we strip away in order to become like someone else?

Jim: Tossed salad better represents the diversity within and across groups. Melting pot doesn't exist now and never did.

Cathy: The notion of a mixing of many different ingredients into one large group makes sense.

Others saw the metaphor as representative of oppression and inequities in the society and institutional systems.

Betty: On the surface the salad idea sounds right, but a closer look shows more dressing (advantages) for some pieces of the salad than for others.

Fred: How can you be a melting pot when you say there can't be any diversity in our language. [How can it be] a melting pot when you put down the culture and raise another one in place of it?

All 5 teachers held rationales about MCNS that agreed with the overall intent of the state mandate, where curriculum should educate about the cultural diversity within U.S. and include the variety of options and possibilities for all men and women. In addition, the mandate directs schooling to maximize the potential for all students and provide equal opportunity resulting in equal outcomes (see Appendix A for more information). Jim provided the strongest support for the mandate, suggesting it represented what good teaching is all about. Arnold was less enthusiastic from a teacher expectation viewpoint, expressing frustration and concern over teachers being asked to do more and more. Betty also expressed concern about the state's

teacher expectations, where the state provides minimal to no teacher preparation and training, yet expects teachers to fulfill the mandate's teaching requirements.

The very existence of the state mandate was seen as a positive influence. Whether it affirmed classroom practices, provided focus for instruction, or signaled areas for improvement, all 5 teachers agreed that the MCNS mandate had influenced their teaching.

Arnold: To the extent that I am trying to bring things that I have never brought in before. I am probably working harder at the nonsexist stuff.

Fred: Yeah, it's made me more aware too. It's made me more sensitive... not that I didn't have it before, but the fact that it gave me more. It also gives me a lot of latitude. Multicultural helps me as a teacher to expand my knowledge. Not only that, but to expand my students' knowledge.

Jim: In the sense that it gave my practice or my way of teaching greater permission to continue. I like to encourage a deeper analysis of the status quo from varying perspectives.

Cathy: I believe it has given the entire language arts group a focus or direction to work on when developing units, etc. I don't know if it has changed teaching all that much. Many of us were already interested in the multicultural issues of the classroom.

Betty: Oh sure, because people are hanging over my shoulder looking at what is going on in terms of meeting the mandates. As far as my own teaching, it has helped give me direction and focus.

The teachers saw their role through multicultural education as a provider of experiences that will enhance students' understandings of themselves and the world around them. The underlying intent is to promote a student's sense of self-worth and to provide an educational environment that respects and protects the individual. How this intent is realized in the classroom varied across teachers. While all the teachers felt diversity should be addressed in the materials selected and in the empathetic experiences students have, only Cathy included the notion of changing her teaching and providing diverse ways to learn as a part of her multicultural instruction.

Arnold: I think that. . .I can affirm a person, that you have value and worth of yourself. That might be very hard to see in a society in which you are a minority or in which you face prejudice everyday. I see myself in a profession that affirms people, that affirms their value.

LESSON: Poem Middle Passage

Focus was on selecting literature that would provide information about the history, culture, and experiences of various groups
--focused on cultural and gender groups
--get students to learn about the historical context of slavery and slave trade
--get students to recognize how little they know about it

Fred: Promote awareness, pride, insight. We are all in this planet but we do not have to be the same.

LESSON: Play The Miracle Worker

Focus was on providing students experiences that would make them sensitive to issue of prejudice. In addition to planned lessons, he would do multicultural education as the opportunity arise based on comments students would make in the classroom
--focus on religion, gender, culture, and disability
--teach about prejudice and sensitivity toward those who are different

Jim: Enjoy providing students the opportunity to see life from another's point of view. Empathy and "in their shoes" experience is important for majority and minority populations.

Greatest impact of multicultural education is changing one's understanding and beliefs about situations and others. This takes time, and needs to be nurtured.

LESSON: Presents the film, El Norte, students preview their understanding of illegal immigration, then view film and discuss with follow up questions and probes. Teaches about the issue of immigration from the view of an illegal immigrant.

Focus on providing students with experiences that would force them to think about a situation in a different way than previously experienced.

Cathy: Part of making a student comfortable about studying is providing them the opportunity to choose their own best method/approach to learning. I try to offer a variety of ways of getting at learning. I also think students need the opportunity to read about other cultures other than their own.

LESSON: Students independently or in small groups studying the mythology of a certain culture. List of cultures derived from students' own brainstorming of cultures--with a package of requirements and expectations to choose from in developing a presentation.

Focus on multicultural education as learning about others and also about oneself through studying others. It also involves presenting instruction in a way that relates to all students--a pedagogical multicultural approach.

Betty: Students (from the minority groups) have the right to read stories that include them in the materials used in the classroom. It is

very important to represent nonsexist, culturally diverse stories in the class.

LESSON: Presented unit on people of color and ethnic groups through readings. Students could select books to read and discuss from a predetermined list. Some books had authors that were of color writing about their own experiences. Some were text about people of color or certain ethnicity by authors not from that group.

Focus on providing students reading experiences about others that would make them aware of other authors, and sensitive to other ways of viewing the world. Also provides insights into prejudice--she would provide insights into local prejudice as the opportunity arose in class discussions. Provide a format for discussing diversity, prejudice, and different ways of knowing.
--to learn about others' lives
--to have representation of diverse authors

The teacher's beliefs about the purpose of language arts instruction impacted the manner in which they infused multicultural approaches into their lessons. Teachers believing language arts curriculum was a means to an end (such as becoming an adequate writer) approached multicultural education as an information sharing program to provide more knowledge about others to their uninformed students. These teachers talked about multicultural education more as a program for the white mainstream students to learn about "others." These teachers were able to clearly differentiate the multicultural education lesson from their "regular" language arts lessons. However, when language arts was viewed more as an ongoing, lifelong pursuit of experiences through the arts, multicultural education was approached more as an inclusive program where all students informed one another about their differences and their similarities. These teachers were less able to differentiate a multicultural lesson from a regular language arts lesson.

Figure 1
Relationship of Multicultural Education Goals
to Language Arts Goals

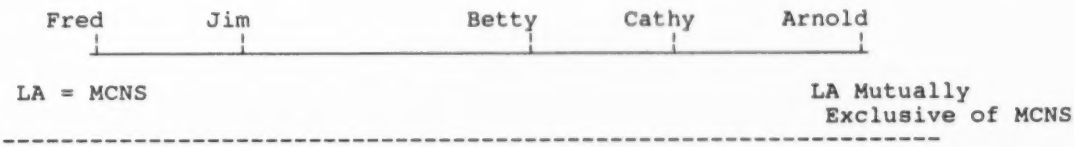

Figure 1 provides a continuum that presents the relationship of multicultural education goals to language arts goals across teachers. Fred was unable to distinguish the differences between his goals for multicultural education and his goals for language arts instruction. In other words, his goals for language arts were realized through multicultural education and his goals for multicultural education were realized through language arts. He did not see these as mutually exclusive sets of goals, but rather as an ongoing representation of the purpose of schooling and teaching, to provide interactive problem solving situations for students to bring their understandings and past experiences in order to create a new and better understanding of their own realities and the world around them. Jim was similar to Fred in that he believed teaching language arts through multicultural themes was not an additional task but part of what good teaching of language arts involves. From that perspective, he was unable to clearly distinguish language arts goals from his multicultural education goals. His pervasive goal in multicultural education was to help students see the social issue in his language arts lessons.

In contrast, Betty, Cathy and Arnold were able to differentiate their language arts goals from their multicultural education goals. Arnold clearly focused his instruction on his goals for language arts. He would incorporate multicultural material and discussion in his language arts instruction as long as it did not interfere with his language arts instructional goals. He saw multicultural education as something to add if applicable to his true task, to teach language arts. Cathy saw multicultural education as something that could be added to her language arts lessons throughout the year. But, she clearly distinguished the difference between a language arts lesson that was multicultural over a strictly language arts lesson. Multicultural lessons were perspective-oriented and provided important artifactual information about others. Lessons focused on the gathering of knowledge about other cultures in other parts of the world in order to better understand one's own world. Betty found multicultural instruction most informative for students when they were

provided alternative perspectives. Her lessons relied on using good literature about others (and, if possible, written by others) to help students see the world through different eyes. While the main goal of multicultural education in her language arts lessons was to inform white students about the lives of people of color, she was not able to clearly articulate how this would be different than just good language arts instruction. Betty is seen as moving toward Fred's perspective of being unable to differentiate teaching goals into specific curriculum areas.

Consistently, teachers wanted to know if what they were thinking and what they were doing in the classroom was "right." The need for confirmation and the desire to "better understand how this fits together" was voiced by all five teachers. Incentives were also an issue the teachers felt impinged on the success of teaching multicultural education. There were no incentives provided by the district or the state in helping teachers develop a multicultural education program, whether the incentives be financial, materials, or inservice support. Other barriers included lack of knowledge about multicultural issues, lack of opportunities to discuss multicultural education within and across schools in the district, lack of community building efforts between the schools and the community, lack of time, zero sum view of curriculum (where certain areas of curriculum must be dropped to add multicultural education), and lack of support from the community. This final barrier is an interesting one, because the community has a 20% Hispanic population that is very interested in developing a multicultural perspective in the schools' approach to teaching. The "support from the community" actually refers to the support from the power sources in the community, the dominant white culture.

There were similar ways of talking about both language arts teaching and multicultural teaching that reflected beliefs about teaching and learning in general. Arnold, Cathy and Betty saw their role as a teacher as one that dispenses information and provides correct views and understandings of literature (in the case of language arts) and correct views and understandings

of others (in the case of multicultural education). Fred and Jim, on the other hand, saw their role as more of a facilitator of learning, providing contexts and situations for students to think about and relate to in their own language and through their own experiences. From this approach, Fred and Jim were less able to provide concrete absolute information to students, but were more able to allow students to struggle through and problem solve their own understanding of such issues as equity, prejudice, and the creation and shaping of ideas and beliefs.

The ways in which teachers presented lessons and discussed teaching were consistent across language arts and multicultural education, forming two broad categories related to the context and design of instruction. Arnold, Cathy and Betty taught lessons incrementally, teaching specific skills or pieces that students then brought together in studying the whole unit. The context of the lesson to the *whole* was provided in summary, framed within the closure of a unit. Fred and Jim taught lessons more holistically, providing a context a priori, relating the lesson to the *whole* as an ongoing process, and continuing to update and validate contexts as they developed.

The greatest impact in teachers' understandings of multicultural education appears to be imbedded in their understanding of teaching and learning. Those that saw the world of instruction as the combination of incremental pieces saw multicultural education as the accumulation of parts to form a limited sum (meaning only so many pieces can be brought together to create a whole). Multicultural education was seen as an addition to the already burdensome amount of teaching being asked of them. For these teachers, time and materials became the greatest factors in determining how effective they can be in classroom instruction. Those that saw instruction as a collective whole viewed multicultural education as part of good language arts instruction and vice versa. For these teachers, the greatest factors in determining effective instruction was their ability to get students problem solving and thinking about the world around them, using each lesson as the vehicle for learning and the students' lives as the context.

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Appendix A
STATE[1] CODE - Section 256.11

The State Board shall promulgate rules to require that a multicultural approach is used by school districts. The educational program shall be taught from a multicultural, nonsexist approach. (Passed in 1978, requiring that is be implemented by 1985.)

State Department of Education. (1989). A guide to developing multicultural, nonsexist education across the curriculum.

STATE'S MULTICULTURAL, NONSEXIST EDUCATION

DEFINITION

Planned curriculum and instruction which educates students about the cultural diversity of our society.

Should help students learn
- --the historical and contemporary contributions
- --variety of roles open to men and women from diverse cultural, racial, and disability groups

Goal
- --maximize the potential of all students regardless of race, cultural heritage, sex, or disability
- --provide equal opportunity for all
- --result in equal outcomes for males and females in all racial and cultural groups

RATIONALE

United States is a tossed salad bowl.

School population and society at large will be increasingly diverse.

All students need to see themselves reflected in the school curriculum
- --to promote feelings of self-worthiness
- --to promote feelings of connectedness
- --to prevent feelings of group superiority

Citizens of a pluralistic society must
- --have skills, knowledge, and dispositions to work effectively with Cultural Others
- --be culturally literate
- --be committed to a social system that protects an individual's worth and dignity
- --appreciate and respect diversity

Educational excellence requires educational equity.

Egalitarianism is basic to America's democratic creed.

Develop healthy intergroup relationships.

[1]The word "state" is used in lieu of actual state name.